

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12th February 2025 in the Methodist Church.

PRESENT:

Cllr. Fardon (Chair), Cllrs. C. Bays, P. Jones, P. Olney, R. Saunders, T. Saunders, J. Walker, the Clerk, Mrs. Paice, Mr. Spencer, Executive Principal Lincroft Academy and 20 members of the public

1. **Apologies** Cllrs. J. Abbott (business), P. White (personal) C. Worker (illness), R. Worker (personal) and two residents
2. **Lincroft Academy Consultation on Expansion of Physical Capacity**

Chair introduced herself, the Clerk, Cllr. Walker who was representing the Parish Council and the Borough Council as the Cabinet member for Valuing Families: Children's Services and Mr. Spencer.

She explained that there were currently 950 students at Lincroft Academy but there was capacity for 210 in each year group i.e. 1,050 in total. The School was consulting on increasing this number to 240 per year group with a total capacity of 1,200.

The planning application for the new building had been granted and required 102 car parking spaces on site, 80 long stay cycle spaces and 6 short stay cycle spaces; a scheme of signage and road markings on Station Road to provide safety warnings and encourage reduced speeds at school times; restrictions on parking on the carriageway along sections of Station Road to improve passing opportunities to the north and south of the site and to allow two way traffic through the bend approximately 410m north of the site and a travel plan prior to the occupation of the new development, which included details of the make-up of a working group involving the school/nursery/Children's Centre, parents and representatives of the local community and measures to reduce car use.

Mr. Spencer thanked Council for the opportunity to discuss the consultation and explained the background. The transition to a secondary school had been challenging with physical improvements needed on site. These included the new dining hall, performing arts studios and new parking spaces on site, which were soon to be completed. There had always been issues in Station Road especially as Oakley Primary was sited next to Lincroft Academy and the School wanted to improve traffic management there. The finishing time at Lincroft School had been altered, teachers supervised traffic at the end of the school day and the School regularly reminded parents and students about behaving respectfully and liaised with neighbours on concerns about noise, litter etc.

The DfE required the current consultation as the Bedford BC Local Plan assessed that 2,000 secondary school places would be needed by 2030. It was only concerned with capacity issues not planning matters and would not be forwarded to Bedford BC. The current Pupil Admission Number was 180 – 200 each year and was expected to rise, although it was not known when it would reach 240. There were no plans for a 6th Form at Lincroft School, as there was sufficient space at Sharnbrook School, nor for further expansion to the site.

Residents were invited to ask questions and if the School could not answer immediately they would provide answers on their website or to individuals if they provided their contact details.

Number of Students

Mr. Spencer reiterated that total capacity would be 1,200 but would depend on parental choice and increases in local population. The increase in numbers was in response to need for places in the Borough not because parents were wanting more places and had been incorporated into the planning application which had been granted. Children from the new development in Clapham could attend Lincroft Academy if they chose to. Cllr. Walker added that Bedford BC had a statutory duty to provide sufficient secondary school places. Biddenham and Wootton Schools had already been expanded but the Borough was short of places in this area.

Staff Parking

Mr. Spencer confirmed that with the new spaces there would be sufficient parking on site for all staff.

Parent/Carer Parking

Concerns were raised about parking in roads around the School, particularly Lovell Road, Lincroft, Reynes Drive and Ruffs Furze. Parents/carers blocked residents' driveways, parked on bends and verges so crossing roads was dangerous for pedestrians and left engines idling. Parking had been a problem for many years and the proposals for Station Road would make no difference. Mr. Spencer commented that the School was looking at interim mitigation for Station Road and Cllr. Walker noted that Bedford BC was aware of the issues. Around 40% of students used buses and the School was working with School Transport to ensure there were enough bus places for additional students but the existing bus bays on site were adequate and would not need to be altered. Mr. Spencer confirmed that school buses were available to pupils travelling over the twin bridges from Bromham etc. so it was parental choice to drive. Cllr. Walker added that the travel plan should cover parking and Mr. Spencer noted that it would be submitted by the end of March 2025 and should be in place from Spring 2026.

Drop Off Points

Residents suggested drop off points at the edges of the villages, near the bypass roundabout or in Clapham and somewhere for pupils to wait in school so they could be dropped off earlier. Cllr. Walker noted that most Clapham students walked to school so drop off points were not needed there and the Lovell Road footway would be improved by the developers of the Milton Road housing to provide a dual walking/cycling path. Mr. Spencer added that the stabbing in Bedford had raised concerns about pupils walking to school but a Breakfast Club would be opening next year to provide early drop off and to ensure access to a healthy meal. Cllr. Walker noted that drop off points could be included in the travel plan but Mr. Spencer was concerned about just moving the parking problem elsewhere.

Residents argued that the new building plan should have provided a pull in place for cars. Mr. Spencer noted that once the building work were completed, all staff would be parking on site and the flow in and out of the School would be improved.

Field Opposite Schools

Residents asked about plans for the field opposite the schools and putting parking there. Cllr. Walker advised that the 40 houses at the northern end of the site were all that were planned up to 2040. The field was privately owned by a Trust and they were unlikely to donate land to the School for parking.

Communication with Parents/Carers

Mr. Spencer advised that the Head regularly communicated with parents/carers and he was attending this meeting. The School also worked with Oakley Primary, emphasised what was expected of students in assemblies and promoted healthy routes to school. When one of the school bus routes was to be withdrawn last year they recognised the potential impact on Station Road and commissioned the service themselves.

Community Use of Lincroft Facilities

Resident was concerned that Lincroft School was no longer available for the Remembrance Service because of the safeguarding requirements. Mr. Spencer noted that DBS checks were not needed for weekend use so the Hall could be used for the Service. The School already rented out sports facilities and rooms and wanted to encourage community use of its spaces.

Chair commented that there were no easy answers to the parking problems but Highways would be asked to attend a Parish Council meeting to discuss them. She thanked Mr. Spencer and everyone for attending and closed the meeting.